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NATIONAL CRIMES
THE CAUSE OF
NATIONAL PUNISHMENTS.

A
DISCOURSE

DELIVERED IN THE
CATHEDRAL CHURCH
OF

PETERBOROUGH,

On the FAST-DAY, Feb: 25th, 1795.

By P. PECKARD, D. D.
DEAN OF PETERBOROUGH.

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NATIONAL CRIMINAL
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OF INVESTIGATION

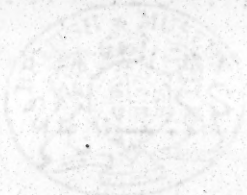
DISCOURSE

DELIVERED BY THE

CENTRAL CHURCH

AT THE

CHURCH OF THE



By the
Rev. J. H. [illegible]
Pastor of the
Central Church

ADVERTISEMENT.

THE author of the following discourse had not, at the writing, the least thought of making it public. But the late disgraceful decision, in support of Injustice and Inhumanity, hath so far raised his honest indignation, as to incite him openly to give his final testimony against a proceeding, equally loaded with private and public dishonour.

Incidentally he hath also deliver'd his opinion on the subject of War, to which the duty of the day seem'd to lead him; and which he supposes will not be well relished by worldly politicians. For with
respect

respect to the usual practice of War, he cannot consider it as reconcileable to common sense, any more than it is to Christianity. If indeed, as one of the worthiest of men (Sir George Saville) once observed, like some savage nations, our Warriors ate those whom they kill'd or made prisoners, something might be said for it. Or, with respect to the dominions of others which they seize and appropriate to themselves, if by the destruction of so many myriads of men, and the dissipation of so many millions of money *Something* in the end were gain'd, that *Something* might possibly form the shadow of a plea, tho' not a justification. But when (as some might express themselves) *Nothing is gain'd but a great loss*, what must be the decision of common sense? In truth, nothing can equal the absurdity of War, but its wickedness; it is an absurdity, because it can only shew which party is the strongest, not which is in the right; and even this can no otherwise be obtain'd, than by crimes of
which

which the human heart is most abhorrent. And when these two Equalities shall be laid before the Final Judge of human merit, they who delight in War, will certainly receive their *Full Pay* according to their deserts.

If the Author shall be condemn'd as superstitious, for what he hath said concerning Providential Interpositions, and the alarming state of present circumstances, he thinks it not necessary to offer any apology. He hath without malevolence, or any private affection, honestly declared his opinion, on several important subjects, impell'd by reverence for the glory of God, a well-tempered Zeal for the honour of Christianity, a truly patriotic ardour for the reputation of his Country, and a disinterested spirit of Universal Philanthropy. Knowing that the united influence of these Principles hath been his real motive, he is free from all solicitude respecting the friendship, or enmity, of the factious partisans for the **INFERNAL TRAFFICK IN HUMAN BLOOD.**

As

As to the rest, he hopes that pardon may be given to any warmth of expression for that cause, in which we may be *angry, and sin not*; and that candid allowance may also be made for inaccuracies of style, not studied, nor correct, and for all other infirmities from that advanced period in life, when man's strength corporeal or mental, is but labour and sorrow, and even that small remnant of ability must very soon be passed away, and gone for ever.

ISAIAH: lviii. 3.

WHEREFORE HAVE WE FASTED,
AND THOU SEEST NOT? WHEREFORE
HAVE WE AFFLICTED OUR SOUL AND
THOU TAKEST NO KNOWLEDGE?

BY the solemn ceremony which
hath now called us together, we
are supposed to acknowledge a
Providential Inspection into human
affairs; and that Virtue or Vice, by the
dispensations of that God to whom we
make our applications, will sometime be
respectively punished or rewarded by
him.

This was the very case with regard
to the Jews. They acknowledg'd a Pro-
vidential Government, as we do. They
transgress'd, they call'd their solemn
assemblies, they fasted, as we do. But at

B

length

length they ask the question in the text, Wherefore have we fasted, and thou seest not? Wherefore have we afflicted our soul, and thou takest no knowledge?

Now it is plainly implied in this question, that the Jews, having been guilty of some National Offence against God, had performed the ceremonial things requir'd by their Religion, in order to obtain forgiveness. They had called their solemn assemblies and observ'd their appointed Fasts. But instead of regaining the accustomed favour and protection of Providence, we read the following Crimination. "To what purpose is this multitude of your Sacrifices? bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies I cannot away with, it is Iniquity, even the solemn meeting. Therefore when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you; yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear."

Now

Now attend to the reason. YOUR HANDS ARE FULL OF BLOOD.

The means by which Providential Interpositions are exerted either in reward or punishment, are to us unknown, and perhaps the mode of operation may under our limited faculties be incomprehensible, yet the belief of such exertions, tho' by some superciliously derided, seems to me to have a solid foundation in reason, as well as in Scriptural Authority.

The fair and candid mind certainly cannot rest contented under the reveries of Atheism. And if this be true, the belief of a Supreme Being is so far established. This also implies by fair induction, the acknowledgement of an Almighty and intelligent Creator, whose power and providence, even his eternal power and universal superintendence is made manifest by the things that do appear.

The arguments to be thus deduced from natural reason in proof of a Providential Inspection, are wonderfully strengthened by the Authority of Scripture. The whole of the Jewish Economy is nothing else. And our Saviour himself expressly declares that it is extended to the minutest of human occurrences. These arguments I acknowledge would not be of any weight, and I should not produce them to unbelievers; but I suppose myself now speaking, to an assembly having faith in God, and in the declarations of his word. One of which is, that thro' these providential Dispensations, Righteousness exalteth a Nation, and Sin is the disgrace, and will finally be the destruction of every people.

Under this dispensation of things the Jews had fallen under the displeasure of the Almighty. Their National Iniquities had separated between them and their God. Their sins had hid his face from them, and he would not hear. They
fasted,

fasted, not for amendment, but for strife, and to smite on with the fist of wickedness. **THEIR HANDS WERE DEFILED WITH BLOOD.** The inference from hence is not only

I. That there is a Providential Inspection into human affairs, but also,

II. That from this fundamental principle it follows, that where Crimes of an enormous nature are constituted *National*, the Punishment in God's appointed time will probably be also *National*.

III. That a notoriety of facts, still existing before our eyes, proves this to have been a regular and established mode of Providential Government. That undoubted history records both the wickedness and consequent destruction of many nations, now no more; of the Canaanites forming many kingdoms; of the four monstrous tyrannies, which in their turn enslaved the world, the Babylonian, the Persian, the Grecian, and the Roman. The Crimes of each respectively as a Nation were unpardonable, and their punishment

punishment was *Nationally* exemplary. They are as a Beacon set on high by Providence to give admonitory illumination; and to warn succeeding nations of what they may expect from obstinate wickedness and inflicted punishment.

But if these instances from former times, by their antiquity, lose their vigour, let us look to circumstances immediately under our view. What think ye of the present state and condition of the Jews? it is before your eyes, it is open to your consideration. It was foretold to them at the very establishment of their Civil Polity, that if they rejected the Lord their God, that he would reject them. "That a nation of fierce countenance should come upon them, who
" should not regard the person of the old,
" nor shew favour to the young; that he
" should besiege them in their gates, until
" their high and fenced walls shou'd come
" down. That they should be driven by
" hunger to devour human flesh; that
" their

“their distress should be so pressing, that
“even the tender and delicate Woman
“among them, who would not adventure
“to set her foot upon the ground for delicateness and tenderness, that her eye
“shall be evil towards her dearest connections, even towards the children that
“she should bear ; for she shall eat them
“secretly for the want of all things, in the
“siege wherewith thine enemy shall distress thee.” And it is worthy of particular remark that this dreadful circumstance actually came to pass at the last siege, and final overthrow of the temple of Jerusalem, and being reported to the Conqueror fill’d him with extreme horror. It was also foretold to them many ages past, That tho’ they should be dispers’d, and scattered among all nations, and that tho’ God should make a full end of all other nations in which they should be scatter’d, yet that a full end should not be made of them, but that they should remain an astonishment, a proverb, and a by-word among all nations.

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The wonderful singularity of this National Punishment, and the verification of it to this present hour supersedes all farther observation upon it.

I would next remind you of that extraordinary revolution in human affairs, which is as it were at the next door, and which seems to be, as far as we can judge, a National Iniquity under the present infliction of a National Punishment. I mean not in the least degree to vilify or calumniate our infatuated neighbours. But it is notorious to the whole world, that for a course of many years they have been sacrificing Christianity to a false and impious Philosophy; and at length have in form by a National Act, not only apostatis'd from the name of Christ, but also by open denial renounc'd the belief of a Supreme Being. Shall I not visit for these things, saith the Lord, and shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?

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We ought always to be very cautious how we make applications concerning the judgments of God; but there certainly may be situations in which such applications are not only very justifiable, but seem to be really unavoidable. And the circumstances of the present time seem to mark in the strongest characters some scene of the greatest importance now opening upon the world by the hand of God. What this scene may be when it shall be fully disclos'd, or what changes it may produce with respect to the great Potentates, and fierce Warriors of the Earth, God only knows, and it would be impious presumption in us to determine.

But it is our duty to enquire how we may be affected by this awful disclosure, and on what ground we ourselves stand in this respect, and honestly examine whether by any notorious National Iniquity we have reason to dread the severe but just visitation of God.

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Is

Is there any instance then in which we stand remarkably distinguish'd, notoriously pre-eminent before heaven, and in the face of the world for any enormous National crime? Consider, and reflect, one moment, I fear we shall be found guilty in more than one instance.

It is an acknowledg'd truth in Moral Jurisprudence, That he who hires one to take away the life of another, is equally guilty with the immediate Murderer. This Conduct among private Individuals is call'd Assassination. When Nation perpetrates this Crime against Nation, it goes indeed under another name, but it is only an enlarg'd scene of Assassination. When the unhappy subjects of an arbitrary Prince, by his sole and despotic act are thus let out by hire for military murder, the unfortunate circumstances of their subjection throw the guilt of the crime upon the Prince. When a nation concurs, and hires such mercenaries for military purposes, the guilt is in great measure

measure taken from the Prince individually, and lies upon the people, and being a National Act, becomes a National Crime. This I apprehend to be our situation at present. To say the truth, it requires some degree of Sophistry to form a complete Justification of War under the Institution of Christianity. (a) It is doubtless permitted, and may be maintained in circumstances which make it absolutely necessary for Self-defence. But as Self-defence is a word not of a clear and simple idea, and is not so defined as that in all cases it shall be precisely known how far it may be legitimately extended, therefore under the pretext of Self-defence, there is great room for Self-deception

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(a) Upon this subject consult Grotius, B. 2. Ch. 22. Puffendorff, B. 8. Ch. 6. Paley, B. 6. Ch. 12. From the enumeration of the unjustifiable Causes of War, it will be very difficult to name a War which has for its Origin a justifiable cause. Bonum, non nisi ex integra Causa, malum, ex quolibet defectu. What can we think of the Spanish Wars in North and South America? of the English, and other European Nations in Asia? but above all of the most infamous and detestable military achievements of the three combined Tyrants against the devoted Empire of Poland?

deception. And I fear it frequently happens that Moral Rectitude in this case is not so much considered as Political convenience. This may possibly be thought some extenuation of the guilt in hiring Mercenary Murderers.

But what think ye of our Sanguinary Traffick in the persons of Men? here we are absolutely without excuse. We fit out our ships with all the instruments of destruction; we load them with preparatory chains, and with engines of torture: all this is done with cool and previous deliberation, shewing a premeditated resolution to enslave, to torture, to destroy. We fill these vessels with bloody-minded ruffians, fitted for every horrid purpose. Being superior in brutal force, we assail far distant nations who have not done us any injury: we attack the dwelling places of innocent and inoffensive men: we rob them of their property: we lay waste their possessions with fire and sword; we force away their natural proprietors

proprietors without distinction, men, women, children, to captivity, to torture, to public sale like beasts of burthen, to unceasing misery, and to premature death. And this is COMMERCE. This is the SLAVE TRADE. Words which are every where pronounc'd without any convulsive horror, or indeed any apparent sense of the enormity. Execrable!

Was this the act merely of Individuals, those Individuals must somewhere answer for the monstrous crime. But we make it in form a National Act, we deliberate, we debate upon it, we establish, we protect it by what we call a Law, which continually involves us in all the horrors of savage cruelty. It stains our hands with blood, which all the waters of the Ocean cannot wash away. Yet no Power on earth hath authority to make such a Law; it is a law to permit the re-iterated commission of Murder. And if we consider the extraordinary illumination in all matters moral and religious given to
us

us in general by the institution of Christianity; and in particular if we bestow a thought upon its characteristic principle, Universal Benevolence, and then cast our eyes upon the horrid crimes now alluded to, what words can be equal to the description of our guilt? we must form a new language for the purpose. In fact we are no better than deliberate, hard-hearted Apostates from Christianity. But have we never read this solemn denunciation? Who so sheddeth man's blood; by man shall his blood be shed. Yet we, as a nation, every year unjustly shed the blood of thousands of innocent persons. Therefore our blood in a National consideration will some time be shed by man.

May I now be permitted to ask to what end is all this wickedness, and all this misery? some trivial commercial gain is pretended. But whatever this commercial gain may be, it is very certain, and it has been fairly prov'd, that it may be more effectually obtain'd by honest means,

means, unstain'd by cruelty or injustice. So that the whole business is a wicked combination of the blackest crimes, maintain'd in the most dishonourable manner by misrepresentation of facts, and gross violation of truth. Nay, so entirely lost to all sense of decency are the partisans of this execrable traffick, that mercenary writers have been procur'd to represent the Scriptures as favouring the cause of Slavery. The Scriptures doubtless in many places make mention of Slaves, and give direction for their humane treatment. But this is merely historical, and is not to be consider'd as an approbation of the practice of making Slaves. The Scriptures relate various instances of other crimes, of Injustice, of Cruelty, of Idolatry, of human Sacrifices, of the Sins of Sodom. Does it therefore follow that the Scriptures approve these crimes? It is too great an insult upon common sense to pretend it. And with respect to commercial gain, suppose it as high as you please, can Commerce justify Injustice, Rapine,

Rapine, Murder? Suppose that mountains of Silver, and mines of Gold, and precious stones were the acquisition, this makes no diminution of the Guilt. Murder will still be Murder, whether perpetrated by a poor or a wealthy man, and will cry with a voice equally loud for vengeance. But still it is insisted on that by these practices we obtain wealth: (*a*) our Merchants become rich, and our nation shines forth in a blaze of Prosperity. True. But it is the blaze of a magnificent city in flames, which tho' it shines wonderfully bright for its hour, must ere long end in deplorable ruin.

Let us enquire then whether there be any parallel case in history, by which we may form a profitable application to ourselves. Look into *Isaiah*, *Jeremiah*, *Ezekiel*, particularly the 26th Ch. of *Ezekiel*,
and

(*a*)——— *odit ipse vim Deus; nec divites
Nos esse rapto, sed probe partis cupit.*

from *EURIP: HEL.*

and read the circumstances, and the fate of the Tyrians.

The City of Tyre was eminently great, as we are, in wealth and power. She extended her commerce, as we do ours, to the extreme parts of the earth. She traded, as we do, in the persons of Men. She became rich, as we do, in the iniquity of her traffick, for her merchants, like ours, were as princes. But what was the sequel? The Lord gave a commandment against the Merchant city to destroy it, and it was level'd with the ground, so that there was no house remaining. Thy riches, and thy fairs, thy merchandise in men, thy mariners, thy men of war, and all thy company which is in thee, shall fall into the midst of the sea, in the day of thy ruin. And they who come down from their ships shall stand upon thy strand, and weep for thee with bitterness of heart, and lament over thee, saying, What city is like Tyrus, like the destroy'd in the midst of the Sea! Such was

D

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the predicted end of this great Commercial state which traded in the Persons of Men. We are a great Commercial state at this very day trading in the Persons of Men. May we repent in time of this enormous National misdoing, and prevent that judicial condemnation which seems to hang over us, and be ready to burst upon us.

For God goeth not forth with our armies, and our usual efforts fail of their usual effect. We suffer heavy distress from the treachery of perfidious allies, and by defeat, flight, and dismay, from an enraged and ferocious enemy, and it may be feared that this is but the beginning of sorrows.

In the dispensations of Providence the insatiable Tyrants of the day were made in successive instances the instruments of God's vengeance to overturn offending nations and seize their dominions. And we have sufficient cause to observe that
the

the present time has its Tyrants equally ambitious, equally unjust, equally insatiable with those of former times. We are not without our Nebuchadnezzar, our Alexander, or our Semiramis, already practis'd and expert in the work of seizing kingdoms by violence and injustice. We read in the Revelations, That three unclean Spirits like Frogs came out of the mouth of the great Dragon. That these are the Spirits of three Devils which go forth into three Potentates of the earth, to gather them to battle. (a) Who then can say that these may not sometime be the fit tho' dreadful instruments of Providence to execute a Tyrian destruction

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upon

(a) Have not these three diabolical Frogs, from the mouth of the great dragon, these three spirits of Devils, found their way into Europe, each taking possession of its Despotie Demoniack? inciting them, among other instances of tyrannic frenzy, to an unjust and cruel invasion of the rights of a worthy Prince, by a tripartite division, amongst themselves, of his dominions. By the same measure they mete withal will it sometime be measured to them again; good measure pressed down, shaken together, and running over with ten-fold vengeance. For Injustice so flagitious will surely awaken the indignation of Heaven.

upon us, who in the Tyrian manner offend the Majesty of Heaven?

For we are inform'd by the Prophecies not yet fully accomplished, that another Tyrus, another great state is certainly to perish for her Mercantile Iniquities, a great commercial State, whose Merchants are waxed rich: but the time must come when these her merchants shall weep, and mourn over her, for no man buyeth their merchandise any more. Then follows a catalogue of the several articles of her trade, concluding with that which is of all the most horrid, the merchandise in SLAVES. In the Original it is, the merchandise in the BODIES and the LIVES of Men. And nothing surely can more emphatically express our murderous traffick in Human Flesh. But the merchants of these things shall stand afar off in the destruction of this iniquitous state for the fear of her torment, weeping and wailing, saying Alas! alas! that great city wherein were made rich
all

all that had ships in the sea, for in one hour she is made desolate.

One observation more and I have done. The disgraceful traffick alluded to, certainly ends, if not in the immediate, yet unavoidably in the premature death of the parties injured. Now it is an undeniable truth, in Pagan as well as Christian morality, That he who shortens the life of another by the certain consequences of indefensible conduct towards him, is equally his murderer as if the death were instant. He who kills any one by poison, tho' the effect does not take place for months or years, is as much his murderer, as if he had with a dagger pierc'd his heart. He who by injustice and violence, loads a man with chains, stifles him in the heat of a crowded dungeon, or brings on a premature death by intolerable labour, is as much his murderer, as if he had given poison, or made use of a dagger. How far these observations may affect those persons who

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who either by their Oratory or their writings, by their sallies of wit, or the levity of ridicule are active in the support of this Iniquity, I do not examine; it is no part of my present business. The application I leave to those whom it most seriously concerns: adding only That in Murder there are no Accessaries; they who in other crimes are in the place of Accessaries, are justly esteem'd Principals in Murder.

Virtuous and benevolent men have exerted themselves to put an end to this disgraceful National Evil. Their laudable endeavours hitherto have not been favour'd with full success. Yet let them firmly proceed in the glorious cause, not despairing of the goodness of God to assist them in their labour of love, of Virtue, and of human happiness. My feeble voice and fervent prayer shall always be exerted on their part, so long as God shall be pleas'd to give me power to utter a syllable, or pour forth my supplication to him.

To

To conclude all, let us seriously attend to this Alternative. We either do, or we do not believe a Providential inspection into human affairs. If we do not, we deny the authenticity and all authority of the Scripture, and by fair construction deny the existence of God. If we do believe this doctrine, and that our actions lie naked and open to that Being, from whom no secrets are conceal'd, and who is of purer eyes than to behold Iniquity, then by the continued support of this enormous National wickedness we stand boldly forth in the presence of God, monsters of accumulated crimes and savage cruelty, and in a manner defy him to take vengeance of our sins.

In this case we may fast, and we may pray, but it is all impious mockery and insult; and except we determine to contract the scenes of general depravity, which it is in every one's power in some degree to do, and in particular, except we, as a Nation, stop the progress of our
great

great National Iniquity, we have no reason to expect the common protection of Heaven; but must consider ourselves as a devoted people, fallen under the wrath of God, and hastening to destruction.

Indeed if we may form a judgment from present circumstances, it seems as if our doom was already past, and that our day was fast advancing. Our boasted wealth, and apparent Power, is no proof of Security from ruin. They who are incorrigibly wicked, are set upon the highest pinnacle of the temple of worldly grandeur, that their fall from thence may be more dreadful, and their punishment of more extensive example. (*tolluntur in altum, ut lapsu graviore ruant.*) Why then should I prophecy unto you smooth things? why prophecy deceits? why say that we are victorious, when we are vanquished? why say that we are a prosperous and happy people, when we are depress'd and groaning under the weight of our wickedness, and the many consequent

quent calamities from the secondary ministration of Divine displeasure.

Let us call to mind that Secondary Causes are all under the controul of the First Great Cause, and that Natural Evils are frequently the punishment of Moral Iniquity.

The raging Elements oftentimes shake a guilty Land. The yawning chasms of an Earthquake, a devouring Pestilence, or Dearth in the devoted country sometimes are God's ministers of wrath. Preternatural severity of season, storm and tempest, snow and frost accomplish the purposes of the Almighty. And whether it be an Army, or a Nation, or a World, whose impious corruptions shall have drawn down the Divine displeasure, a Partial or an Universal Inundation may be the execution of merited vengeance. As the stars in their courses fought against the host of Sisera, and the river Kishon swept them away.

E

Thus

Thus was an army at once destroyed and swallowed in the Deep.

The people of Egypt by impious idolatry had long provoked the Lord: they pursued the Israelites into the midst of the sea; but God blew with his wind, the sea covered them, and they sank as lead in the mighty waters.

Thus was a Nation at once destroyed and swallowed in the Deep.

So also in the days before the Flood, when all flesh had corrupted themselves, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, were pursuing, as we now are, every mode of dissipation and vicious indulgence, and consider'd not that the windows of heaven were opened upon them, when the Flood suddenly came and took them all away. For the waters prevailed exceedingly upon the earth: and every living substance was destroyed, that was upon the face of the ground.

Thus

Thus was a whole world at once destroyed and swallowed in the Deep.

The windows of heaven have been opened upon us, and a dreadful Inundation had well nigh taken us away. Have we then no reflection? can we make no application? God indeed hath said, that he will not a second time drown the whole earth, yet surely a general and fearful inundation, after these instances, might serve as a warning; this alarming event might bring to our minds, that the insatiable rage of an irresistible enemy may prove the minister of God, and overwhelm us like a Flood.

Let us then put aside our vain delusions. Let us compare the serene comforts, and inestimable blessings of Peace, with the inseparable crimes, and unavoidable miseries of War. Let us beseech God to remove from the haughty Potentates, and fierce Warriors of the Earth, that obdurate infatuation of mind which makes them

regardless of the great duty of Christian Benevolence, which renders them deaf to the calls of Humanity, and insensible to the cries of the afflicted: which entirely hardens the heart, and embrues the hands in human blood. Let us attend seriously to the duty which hath call'd us together this day. Let us, not in appearance only, but in sincerity, repent of all our misdoings. And then that merciful Being, who can raise the poor out of the dust, and lift the needy out of the dunghill, will lift us from our present depression. Above all things let us not despair; let us trust in God, and reform our lives, and then shall we soon become really prosperous and happy. Let us pray to God, that Peace may once again visit our land, and plenteousness be found in all our borders. Then may we with gratitude of heart, and humble confidence apply for relief in any distress that hereafter may arise, and God will no more hide his face from us, when our hands are no longer **DEFILED WITH BLOOD.**

F I N I S.



